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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 002602

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TH](#) [TRT](#)

SUBJECT: THAILAND: MORE REPORTS OF FACTIONAL FERMENT IN THE THAI RAK THAI PARTY

REF: (A) BANGKOK 2347 (B) BANGKOK 1819

[11.](#) (SBU) Summary: A prominent Bangkok daily, the "Krungthep Thurakit," reported on April 12 that Thai Rak Thai (TRT) Secretary General and Transportation Minister Suriya Jungrungreangkit may lose his party position at the TRT's next general meeting on April 24. Reportedly, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra is displeased with Suriya's earlier dalliance with powerful insurgent Wang Nam Yom faction leader and Tourism and Sports Minister Somsak Thepsuthin. Several names have been tipped as Suriya's potential replacement at the powerful Secretary General's post, including Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Chidchai Vanasatidya, "Chart Pattana" faction leader and Justice Minister Suwat Liptipanol, or Agriculture Minister (and leader of a powerful Bangkok faction) Sudarat Keyuraphun. If these rumors result in Somsak's removal, it will demonstrate anew Thaksin's determination to put only those he trusts completely in powerful party and government positions. End Summary.

SURIYA TRIED TO PLAY BOTH SIDES?

[12.](#) (SBU) The April 12 daily "Krungthep Thurakit" reported that Thai Rak Thai (TRT) Secretary General and Transportation Minister Suriya Jungrungreangkit may lose his party position at the TRT's next general meeting, which is scheduled for April 24. Suriya, considered one of the TRT's "power figures" because of his role as a major party financier, allegedly worked secretly with powerful TRT Wang Nam Yom faction leader and Tourism and Sports Minister Somsak Thepsuthin to support the Mahachon Party in last February's national parliamentary elections. Their reported logic in doing so was to play all the political angles, betting that Mahachon would make a much more powerful showing than it eventually did (only two seats).

PRIME MINISTER TO DEMOTE SURIYA?

[13.](#) (SBU) As the story goes, Thaksin, unhappy at what he considers Suriya's duplicity, was prepared after the election to punish one of the TRT party's financial benefactors by moving him out of the Transport Ministry and into the less powerful (and less potentially lucrative) position of Deputy Prime Minister. Suriya, perhaps relying on his remaining clout within the TRT apparatus, managed to keep his Secretary General and Transport Ministry positions in the first phase of appointments and reappointments following Thaksin's landslide win. Suriya is reportedly distancing himself from Somsak, who recently allied himself with an openly unhappy coalition of TRT factions (Ref. A) headed by Sanoh Thienthong of the Wang Nam Yen group. Looking to get back in the Prime Minister's good graces, Suriya reportedly is making political overtures to Yeowapa Lapwongsawat, Thaksin's sister and head of the powerful Wang Bua Ban faction.

RUMORED REPLACEMENTS AS TRT SECRETARY GENERAL

[14.](#) (SBU) Several names are being mooted as Suriya's potential replacement. Two have been close to Thaksin during his rise to political power: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Police General Chidchai Vanasatidya, who attended school with Thaksin in the U.S. and as a policeman reportedly carried out "dirty" activities for the Prime Minister. Another possibility is Sudarat Keyuraphun. As noted in earlier reporting, she is one of the most prominent women in Thai politics. Sudarat is currently the First Deputy Leader of the Thai Rak Thai Party and is a leader of the Bangkok faction in the TRT. A third possibility is Justice Minister Suwat Liptipanol. Suwat is former leader of the now-defunct Chart Pattana party (CP), which he merged with the TRT in September 2004. He now heads a "Chart Pattana" faction within TRT, and has proven to be somewhat of a favorite of the Prime Minister.

THAKSIN IN CHARGE

[15.](#) (SBU) Comment: Though Suriya may still persuade the Prime Minister of his loyalty and keep his job, there remains a strong possibility that Thaksin will shake up his party in order to put people he trusts completely in positions of power. Thaksin does not tolerate opposition of any level or what he perceives as disloyalty within his party. Though

Suriya has had the advantage of being a strong funding source, the Prime Minister is wealthy in his own right and can also raise funds from an expanding number of what he may consider more reliable sources. This may not bode well for Suriya. End Comment.

BOYCE